

\$24m spent on abandoned works 'good management'

BY LAURA CHAN

TWO top government officials claim that \$24 million spent on an abandoned police headquarters project was the result of "good management".

Acting Secretary for Security Ken Woodhouse denied claims the Security Branch had not carefully examined the priorities of different projects when plans were abandoned to build a Kowloon East regional headquarters.

The police opted for a temporary arrangement in Tseung Kwan O police station.

Police Commissioner Li Kwan-ha said money had not been wasted because the piling works on the site could still be used for another project.

The denials came after Director of Audit Brian Jenney criticised the government for letting the new Kowloon East headquarters site lie idle for

two years without any superstructure works.

Jenney also said the Secretary for Treasury failed to halt piling work being laid, which caused more wastage.

The report said the site became an open-air car park in 1992 which generated \$2 million in rent annually.

Meeting Point legislator Dr Leong Che-hung criticised the government's "lack of priority decisions".

Li said that in 1990 the government was working hard to fund the airport core projects and it was "helpful" to suspend construction of the Kowloon East police headquarters.

He said it was "a painful and reluctant decision" to suspend the project. Compen-



Li Kwan-ha

sation would have to have been paid if piling work was stopped in the middle of the contract.

Police administration officer Martin Lewis said it would not have been sensible "to leave a big hole on the site" while piling work was in progress.

Secretary for Treasury Yeung Kai-yin said the condition of the site would deteriorate without piling.

Independent legislator Simon Ip asked what would happen to the site if the Kowloon East headquarters were not built.

Woodhouse said the site could be used for other purposes such as a hospital and that money could be saved from construction costs because piling work had already been done.

The Kowloon East headquarters was planned as a 17-storey block with a carpark basement and a five-storey shooting range.